



## Qualifications of Personnel: Training and Certification

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UNIVERSALLY, ASSOCIATIONS define their memberships by qualifications. Library associations are no exceptions. The constitution of virtually every professional organization studied by this writer supports this fact. The section or paragraph on objectives is almost always followed by one on "who may join." Inevitably the association must establish classes of membership and the qualifications for each.

Even the 1853 Librarians' Conference in New York City planned to qualify its members almost as soon as it set up its objectives. On the very first day of the meeting a resolution to Congress was under way asking that Charles Coffin Jewett, then librarian of the Smithsonian Institution, be authorized to prepare a library manual with which better to qualify the membership. Similarly, after Justin Winsor and his six colleagues received the American Library Association charter from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on December 10, 1879, it was followed shortly by a bylaw authorizing the Executive Board to appoint a committee of eight on library training. Again, Roy Stokes has described elsewhere in this issue how the Royal Charter and Bye-Laws of the Library Association contains two specific commitments on qualifications: "To promote whatever may tend to the improvement of the position and the qualifications of Librarians" and "To hold examinations in Librarianship and to issue Certificates of efficiency."<sup>1</sup>

If there is agreement among associations that promoting qualifications of personnel is a major professional objective, there is also some disagreement among national library organizations as to the medium through which the association can best influence better qualifications among its members. Stated simply and with all the cautions that should accompany simplification, national library associations can be divided

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today into two camps on this issue of improving qualifications. In one the national library associations stress certification of individuals, in the other the national associations favor accreditation of institutions. Although most national library associations exert influence on both certification and training of its members, it is safe to say that in those nations where the national association administers a national examining agency there is relatively less control of training agencies. Conversely, where professional opinion is opposed to a national professional examination, the association tends to exert greater influence on the training agencies.<sup>2</sup>

For the sake of contrast some of the activities in the areas of personnel qualification by the Library Association of the United Kingdom and by the American Library Association are compared. These two national associations, more than perhaps any two others, illustrate the positions of each camp. They are the two oldest professional library organizations in the world. For three-quarters of a century they have rather consistently indicated the direction in which they think a library association can best influence the development of personnel qualifications.

Almost from the start the A.L.A. evidenced a greater interest in training than in certification. Within seven years of its organization and hardly four years after the receipt of its charter, the blueprint for the first professional library school in the world was on its conference table. As a matter of fact, in the very year A.L.A. was chartered Melvil Dewey<sup>3</sup> wrote, "we need a training school for preparation for the special work. The village school mistress is provided with normal schools by the hundred, where the best methods of teaching are taught. Physicians, lawyers, preachers, yes even our cooks have special schools for special training. But the librarian, whose profession has been so much exalted, must learn his trade by his own experiments and experience." The plan for a library school was accepted by Columbia College at a full meeting of its trustees in 1884, and on January 5, 1887, the School of Library Economy was officially opened.

In 1890 the first standing committee on training for librarianship was established by the A.L.A.<sup>4</sup> Two years later the second library school, that at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, opened its doors. Drexel Institute in Philadelphia followed in 1892 and Armour Institute in Chicago in 1893. By 1917, the year of American entry into World War I, no fewer than fourteen full-fledged library schools had been activated and an Association of American Library Schools organized. Meanwhile Mary Wright Plummer for the A.L.A. Committee on Training for

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Librarianship had issued a comprehensive report in 1903.<sup>5</sup> Then in 1909 the A.L.A. created a Professional Training Section for its membership providing a forum to support committee action.

Quite different from this early, continued, and distinguished effort to improve qualifications of library personnel through training is the more deliberate and casual professional interest in certification. One searches the literature in vain for an impassioned appeal for certification like Melvil Dewey's for a library school, or for an exhaustive report on national certification comparable to Mary Wright Plummer's tremendous job on training. Not until 1916, the year before the end of this early pre-World War I period, did the A.L.A. Council appoint a Committee on Standardization of Libraries and Certification of Librarians. After three years more the outlines of a national certification system were presented at the Asbury Park Conference in 1919, informally approved, and referred to the Council. Two years later the Committee on National Certification and Training submitted a suggested plan of certification. Still nothing significant happened. By 1923, the year of the Williamson Report, the total result of all efforts toward certification were laws in two states, Wisconsin and New York, requiring some form of certificate for persons employed in public libraries. Four other states, California, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota, had adopted some scheme of voluntary certification.<sup>6</sup>

In Britain the story of the Library Association's first fifty years was almost exactly the opposite. The Royal Charter itself authorized the association to proceed to certification by holding national examinations in librarianship. In July 1885 the Library Association held its first examination in accordance with a syllabus it had previously prepared. Three candidates presented themselves then, and every chartered librarian since has had to pass the national examinations in order to be certified as professional librarians.

On the other hand, not until 1919, with the beginning of the University of London School of Librarianship, could Britain be said to have established a library school. Provisions for library training had been made long before, of course. At the fifteenth annual meeting of the Library Association J. J. Ogle of the Bootle Public Library read a paper on a "Summer School of Library Science," and in the summer of 1893 such a school was held. Subsequently the association's Summer School Committee changed its name to Education Committee, and a program of training library assistants began in 1898. But that program was quite different from the one fostered through the library schools by the A.L.A.

In 1902 the Library Association began a period of co-operation with the London School of Economics where courses were offered in bibliography, classification, cataloging, library law, and library economy. This arrangement, though it failed to create a complete library school, nevertheless provided instruction in an academic center for librarians in the London metropolitan area. But it still left library assistants in the rest of the United Kingdom without adequate opportunity to prepare for the national examination. Consequently in 1904 the Library Association launched its correspondence program and called upon certain provincial colleges to offer lectures on library economy and bibliography. Several agencies responded, notably Manchester School of Technology, John Rylands Library (also in Manchester), the University of Leeds, and Armstrong College, Newcastle. All of this instruction had a single purpose: to enable the students to pass the national examination.

Inevitably these early emphases—on certification in Britain and on training in the United States—continued. That is not to say the Library Association has been disinterested in training agencies nor that the A.L.A. has ignored certification. It is to say that the trends in both countries as described in the following paragraphs establish clearly the fact that in the United Kingdom training exists almost exclusively for the purpose of preparing candidates to pass the national certification examination; in the United States certification or evidence of professional competence is dependent upon graduation from an accredited training agency.

After World War I the Library Association steadily encouraged creation of more training opportunities for those who desired to pass the national examination for certification. Nevertheless, all of the efforts pointed in a direction quite different from that taken by its American counterpart. With one possible exception not a single British library school can be said to be accredited today by the national library association in the way American library schools are accredited by the A.L.A. The possible exception is the University of London School of Librarianship. To the extent that its graduates are exempt from the registration examination, (the examination which leads to an associateship in the Library Association) the London school is comparable to an accredited American library school in its relationship to the national association. But to the extent that its graduates, after graduation from the library school, must take the final examination to be admitted to full fellowship in the association, the London school is unlike American accredited library schools.

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The other nine British library schools have no accreditation from the Library Association in the American sense. Their college graduates, like the graduates of any college, are exempt from the first or entrance examination. But they must take both the registration examination for the associateship, and when the time comes, the final examination for the fellowship to be certificated. The Library Association, however, does list these nine schools in its *Yearbook* along with the University of London, under "Facilities for Study and Training for the Examinations" as "Schools of Library Training."<sup>7</sup>

In addition the Library Association lists correspondence courses conducted under the auspices of the Association of Assistant Librarians, part-time courses offered by various schools and colleges to prepare for various aspects of the examination, summer schools, and occasional courses. Above all, the Library Association prepares and publishes a detailed syllabus on which the examination is based, a very full bibliography, and the most recent examination itself. There can be no question that the Library Association devotes a considerable portion of its resources to training, but it is also evident that the direction of its efforts is quite different from that taken by the A.L.A.

That difference can be further shown by reviewing the greater emphasis placed by the A.L.A. and its members on training during the period since World War I. At the Asbury Park Conference in 1919 C. C. Williamson, then with the Rockefeller Foundation, recommended to the association that they create a board with a permanent staff headed by a competent expert as executive to (1) formulate a standard scheme of grading library positions; (2) decide minimum qualification of training and experience for each grade and issue certificates to all applicants who qualify; and (3) examine and approve schools that meet standards and give graduates of such schools, automatically, certificates of appropriate grade.<sup>8</sup> In successive steps the association appointed a Committee on National Certification and Library Training in 1920; a Temporary Library Training Board in 1923; and a permanent Board of Education for Librarianship in 1924 of which Adam Strohm of the Detroit Public Library became the first chairman. It is worth noting that even though Williamson placed great stress on certification, and the first of the three groups appointed by the association named certification first in its title, the permanent board that resulted, nevertheless, had only education in its name.

The famed Williamson Report, itself, made much of certification.<sup>9</sup> One of its major recommendations was for a national examining board with responsibilities not only for the quality of library training but for

the qualifications of individual librarians. The fact that the institutional accreditation recommendation alone has been adopted in the two decades since would seem to indicate the American climate for national examination is much less favorable than that in Britain.

During the period of transition from the old fifth year Bachelor of Science degree programs to the present Master's degree programs there was a slight flurry in behalf of national examinations. Mary D. Herrick made a strong appeal for such an examination in 1950,<sup>10</sup> but a questionnaire survey<sup>11</sup> seemed to indicate lukewarm interest if not genuine professional allergy toward the idea.

In summary, the British professional position on the qualifications of personnel, as reflected by the action of the national library association, has been to establish qualifications through a national examination administered by the Library Association and to encourage the development of training opportunities to prepare candidates for this examination. The American position has been to accredit the training agencies through careful supervision, evaluation, and inspection and then to accept the graduates of these institutions as automatically certificated.

The reason for the comparative neglect of certification by the A.L.A. is not difficult to understand. Britain is a small compact geographical unity; the United States comprise forty-eight autonomous units, jealous of their individual certification authority. Recent resistance to federal concentration of powers probably has not helped any national certification movement. The range of library development in the various sections of the country and the diversity of problems found in the different states complicate an over-all plan of national certification.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, considerable A.L.A. effort has gone into various aspects of certification and standardization. Following the appointment by the A.L.A. Council in 1916 of a committee on Standardization of Libraries and Certification of Librarians, considerable professional discussion of certification ensued. Although a potent opposition expressed the belief that national certification would stifle librarians of the "original, genius" type, the association nevertheless proceeded to study positions and personnel through several committees and boards. One of these committees sponsored a survey of all library activities in the United States which resulted in significant pictures of library personnel.<sup>13</sup>

The A.L.A. Board of Salaries, Staff, and Tenure, and its co-operating committees have probably advanced the United States farthest along the road of certification. From its activities several important publications have resulted. The first of these was the so-called Telford Report of 1927, *Proposed Classification and Compensation Plan for Libraries*.<sup>14</sup>

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Developed in cooperation with the Bureau of Personnel Administration of the Institute for Government Research, the report represented the findings of numerous job analyses of library positions. For the first time the duties of various library positions were described and the qualifications necessary to perform those duties stated. For the first time, also, library positions were graded. Here was a truly solid foundation for national certification if the nation of librarians had a notion to permit anything of that sort.

The Telford Report was followed in 1929 with a separate report for budgets, classification, and compensation for university and college libraries, which superseded that part of the original report.<sup>15</sup> These reports were monumental. They affected certification in states and municipalities subsequently. Because of these reports the various regions of the nation moved toward standardization of position specifications in libraries. Revisions of these reports followed with the publication of budgets, compensation, and classification plans for municipal libraries in 1939,<sup>16</sup> and for institutions of higher education in 1943,<sup>17</sup> the latter a joint project with the Association of College and Reference Libraries. Taken together, these reports of the Board on Salaries, Staff and Tenure, the work of various state and municipal civil service groups, and the interest of the Board of Education for Librarianship, as well as individual librarians, represent a considerable associational effort in behalf of certification. The fact remains, despite the current action of the Council, that as a nation the United States is still far from any general professional acceptance of national certification by government or by association.

Agreeing that some greater measure of uniformity in assuring a minimum standard of professional competence is needed in the United States if librarianship is to take its place among the strong professions, what can be done? In this writer's opinion a national plan of examination and certification such as the British have, although it has many advantages, would have little chance of professional acceptance here. Both the medical and law precedents are for state rather than federal control. The accredited library schools feel very strongly that they are more competent to examine their own graduates. There is, besides, the American educational objection to making the end-all of the learning process a final examination.

In view of these considerations it appears to the writer that national certification in the United States of professional librarians must come not through federal government action but through increased professional influence on training agencies and on state certification agencies.

This influence should follow American historic lines rather than the British direction. But this influence should also become more positive at certain points in both the training and certification areas.

In the training area, the new standards of 1951<sup>18</sup> are a significant and forward step in the direction of establishing a professional minimum for the qualifications of personnel. These standards are daily consolidating the position of librarianship in the graduate faculties of American universities. It is these standards which have restored a measure of that uniformity which is essential to the unity of any profession or of any academic discipline. Through these standards the drift and chaos which followed World War II were halted and replaced by direction and order. But the 1951 Standards and the interpretative manual that accompanies them provide a guide for only one segment of the profession, albeit a very important segment.

What is needed now is some direction below and above. Despite the desirability of a five-college-years basic program, the need and the necessity for something less still exists. Community libraries everywhere, urban as well as rural, could use a four-year graduate for a variety of reasons related to supply, salary, and the actual requirements of the positions involved. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that many of these libraries could do well with some junior college graduates. Further, beginning teachers in the nations' school systems need not have more than four years of college. For these and other reasons, there is an urgent need to plan two- and four-year programs with junior colleges, teachers' colleges, and other institutions of higher education offering courses in librarianship that are not part of accredited five-year programs. That considerable work has already been done in this area is abundantly evident in such publications as *Standards for Library Science Programs in Teacher Education Institutions*<sup>19</sup> and in other efforts to arrive at a common pre-core in short courses.

Many of the leaders in the profession are not graduates of accredited library schools. Through experience, academic specialization, and self-study these librarians have arrived at a high stage of professional competence. Neither in Britain nor in the United States is there a method by which these librarians may be certificated except through the regular channels. In Britain it means passing of the national examination; in the United States professional acceptance comes through graduation from an accredited library school. Although eventually one or both of these should be the only gateway to certification, the time does not appear to be here for librarianship to turn its back upon either academic competence or leadership in closely related fields.

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In consequence it might be desirable for the A.L.A. to establish a type of advanced seminar-examination certification. Admission to this type of examination might be based on such prerequisites as a number of years of highly successful library experience, an outstanding contribution to librarianship, a distinguished academic record in one of the university disciplines, or creative work in one of the peripheral areas like publishing, archives, museum curatorship, bibliography, and documentation. The examination itself might take the form of a major essay in the examinee's specialty followed by an oral defense before his peers.

For all others who wish to enter the profession and cannot through an accredited library school, the A.L.A. might well administer jointly with the library schools a set of national examinations. These examinations and the syllabi accompanying them would serve to standardize the work of the many short course programs offered. Certificates to fit the various levels of examination would be of inestimable help to state certification agencies and to civil service commissions.<sup>20</sup>

A library association's responsibility for the qualifications of personnel is inescapable. Whether the association can be most effective by regulating training agencies more or by administering certification through examination is debatable. The American and British associations exemplify each emphasis. It is probable that the qualifications of personnel can be best influenced by equal attention to training and certification.

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